

Well, enough of that. It is time we invested more in our people and less in our defense contractors. My Common-Sense Budget Act would trim \$60 billion in waste from the Pentagon budget and put it to work on behalf of the people and the programs that truly strengthen America. The money would be distributed as follows: \$5 billion a year for homeland security to make up for funding shortfalls in emergency preparedness, infrastructure upgrades, and grants for first responders; \$10 billion each year for energy independence, to kick the imported oil habit that we have in this Nation by investing in efficient, renewable energy sources; \$5 billion devoted to putting a dent in the \$8.2 trillion national debt; and for children's health care, \$10 billion annually to provide health care coverage for the millions of uninsured American children; \$10 billion over 12 years to rebuild and modernize every public K-12 school in this country; \$5 billion a year to retrain 250,000 Americans who have lost their jobs because of foreign trade; medical research, \$2 billion a year to restore recent cuts to the National Institutes of Health budget; and \$13 billion a year in humanitarian assistance that allows poor nations to feed 6 million children who are at risk of dying from starvation every year, to end global hunger.

The money is there to make an extraordinary difference in people's lives. We just need to challenge the entrenched interests and take on the sacred cows.

General Larry Korb worked with the Progressive Caucus and me to draft this model alternative, and Ben Cohen from Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream and the organization Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities also helped make the introduction of this bill possible.

There are models of good corporate citizenship, you see, businesses that understand that the return on these investments will benefit the entire society: a skilled workforce, healthy children, modern schools, fewer fossil fuels, better fire departments, scientific progress, less debt. These socially responsible businesses understand what makes America strong and safe, and it is not a bloated Pentagon budget that continues to invest in Cold War.

GAS PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, gas prices are rising and someone is to blame.

The root cause of the rising gasoline prices, as an editorial in this week's Wall Street Journal rightly states, is the incredible shrinking of supply of a gasoline additive called MTBE. The production of MTBE has been for 15 years the direct result of a Federal mandate that such oxygenates be included in the Nation's gas supply. It was mandated by a Democrat Congress seeking to help clean the environment.

Now, that mandate is expiring in May, in large part owed to the discovery of MTBE in some water supplies, a discovery that has trial lawyers salivating as they count down the days. And the main culprit for its seeping into water supplies is faulty, unrepaired, leaking underground storage tanks.

But the producers of those do not have the deep pockets of MTBE producers. Thus, when MTBE producers' liability protection expires in May, as the editorial states: "Producers and refiners will face far greater liability, which has set off a race to exit the market" because, as history has shown, the vultures in the lawsuit-happy trial bar will pounce on those with the deepest pockets.

In other words, the Federal Government mandated the production and addition of MTBE as a clean air additive to the Nation's fuel. But now the government says that mandate, while good for clean air, turns out actually to have been bad for groundwater. Now the government wants to let trial lawyers hold the industry accountable for environmental problems the government itself created with its original mandate. Meanwhile, the Nation's ethanol producers, who must now fill the additive void created by the widespread and predictable MTBE pullout, have already admitted they cannot meet the new market demand.

No MTBE and not enough ethanol will mean less gasoline on the market, less gasoline that can be prepared for the market, creating a shortage of supply and thus higher prices. In other words, come Memorial Day, gas prices, which are already higher than they have been since the early days after Hurricane Katrina, stand to spike even higher.

All of this economic analysis in the Journal's editorial, regrettably, is true. What is not true is the editorial's insinuation that congressional Republicans are to blame for it.

On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, House Republicans fought for years to include MTBE-liability protection in the energy bill. The bill was shelved in 2003 when a Democrat-led filibuster, joined by liberal Republicans, succeeded in killing it, an outcome brought about, the then-Democrat leader said, by "the House Republican leadership's insistence on inclusion of retroactive liability protections for MTBE."

So in 2004 the energy bill effectively died when the Senate Energy and Natural Resources chairman unilaterally pulled the MTBE provisions from the Senate version of the legislation. So, finally, in 2005 the MTBE-protection provision was described by the House minority leader as a "disgraceful . . . giveaway." Enough Senate Republicans agreed with this false assessment to ensure that the energy bill was finally passed, after 4 years of effort, without the desperately needed MTBE provisions that House Republicans advocated for so long.

The result: the ethanol-MTBE fiasco, as the Journal puts it, is not the fault of Republicans on Capitol Hill, broadly speaking, but only about seven of them, all Senators, Senators who joined obstructionist Democrats and eco-extremists to punish an innocent industry.

House Republicans warned all along about the MTBE pullout, the ethanol shortfall, and the resulting spike in gas prices just in time for the 2006 summer traveling season, and we were right.

MTBE liability protection is the only thing standing between the American people and \$3-a-gallon gas this summer. And the only thing standing between MTBE-liability and the President's signature is a collection of Senators, the long-term effects of whose shortsighted grandstanding are only now starting to be felt.

So, Americans, when it hits \$3 a gallon, call the Senate.

Hopefully, yesterday's editorial will give MTBE-protection new life in Congress. And if not, drivers, especially in those States of Senators from New Mexico, Arizona, Maine, Vermont, Iowa, Illinois, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and New Hampshire, will know who to thank.

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THE ECONOMY IS NOT AS ROSY AS REPUBLICANS CLAIM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the headline economic numbers and listen to the Bush Administration's talking points, you could get the impression that the economy is in pretty good shape.

But when we talk to our constituents, we get a very different picture. We hear anxiety about the economy, and a feeling that things are not going very well for the typical American family. The White House seems puzzled by this discrepancy, but it is very simple.

The benefits of the economic recovery from the 2001 recession have not been going to ordinary Americans. President Bush likes to cite statistics on how fast the economy is growing and how much productivity has increased.

But what he does not mention is that, on his watch, the economy went through the most protracted job slump in decades. There is still considerable evidence of hidden unemployment and that the benefits of productivity growth have been showing up in the profits of companies rather than in the paychecks of ordinary American workers.

Yes, workers have become more productive. They produce more and more in each hour that they work, but they have not been getting this reward in

their own paycheck for their productivity. Average hourly earnings have not kept up with inflation for the past 2 years, and they barely kept even the year before that.

Median family income has failed to keep up with inflation every year under President Bush. Mr. Speaker, even more disturbing than the general stagnation in wages and incomes is the growing gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in this country, as income earnings disparities have widened.

This is an extremely troubling trend for everyone in our country. Those who are already well-to-do are indeed doing very well in the Bush economy. But the typical American family is struggling to make ends meet in the face of high costs for energy, health care and college education for their children.

This chart illustrates the problem very clearly. The red bars show the growth in the inflation adjusted usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers under President Bush at different points in the earnings distribution.

You have to be in the upper half of the distribution to have seen any gain. Earnings at the top have grown fastest relative to inflation, and earnings at the bottom have fallen farthest behind inflation.

I would note the contrast with the last 5 years of the Clinton Administration, which is illustrated with the blue bars when earnings and gains were strong and spread throughout the earnings distribution.

Mr. Speaker, the economic policies of the Bush Administration are not benefiting ordinary American families. The Bush economy and Bush economic policies have produced a widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots," and they have produced a legacy of deficits and debt that leaves us unprepared to deal with the budget challenges posed by the retirement of the baby-boom generation.

And that weakens the future standard of living of our children and grandchildren. We need to do better. We can do better if we focus on policies that address the economic challenges facing the ordinary American worker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DREIER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PROBLEMS WITH MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the countdown to the Bush drug tax, 44 days before May 15, May 15.

Last week, during the break, I held six town hall meetings throughout my district on the new Medicare Part D prescription drug program. And I would encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. Not only did it give my constituents a chance to get the help that they needed and answered their questions, it gave me an opportunity to really find out how the new program is working or, should I say, not working.

Unfortunately, I heard a lot of horror stories from a lot of people. Not only is picking a plan extremely complicated, but the arbitrary date of May 15 makes absolutely no sense. I have been an elected official for over 25 years. And this is the first time I have seen people who are going to be penalized for the rest of their lives if they do not sign up by a certain date, May 15.

Not only having them to set a ridiculous short time to sign up for this complicated plan, but the next time seniors can sign up will be November 15 through December 31, that includes both Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. So it is very complicated for seniors.

The Republican leadership wrote a bill that prevents the Secretary of Health and Human Services from negotiating the price of the drug, even though both the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of DOT are negotiating these prices right now.

Can you imagine what would happen if Wal-Mart, if we told Wal-Mart they could not get a reduction price on bulk buying? Every Republican in this House would be on this floor screaming bloody murder. But when it is the needs of our seniors, there is a deaf ear; you do not hear them.

This bill allows the private plans to take drugs off of their approved lists and even charge more for drugs during that year. They can charge more, while seniors are locked in and cannot change plans until the next year.

It also turns seniors into criminals. Yes, criminals. What do I mean? If they buy drugs that are cheaper, let us say in Mexico or Canada, they will be criminals.

And one of the most troubling aspects of this bill, and the one that most people talk about is the doughnut. What do you mean doughnut? Well, no coverage is provided after you spend \$2,250 until your cost reaches \$5,001. That is \$3,000 out-of-pocket.

Lastly, I want to talk about the independent pharmacists. This bill is killing your small town pharmacists who have been in business for years. They still know their customers by name. They are the only pharmacists who are

still delivering medicine to seniors who cannot come out of the house or after hours when someone needs an emergency prescription.

This Congress needs to do the right thing for our parents and grandparents and extend this silly deadline date of May 15, allow the Secretary to negotiate bulk prices, and should make the appropriate changes that will save America's local pharmacies from extinction.

Again, I encourage my colleagues to hold their meetings and talk to their seniors and pharmacies about the drug plan. And seniors, for God's sake, please look at this: May 15, you need to sign up. But if you have questions, call Medicare counselors at 1-800-Medicare, that is, 1-800-633-4227. That is May 15. That is the drop-dead date. Thank you.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AMERICA'S POLICIES IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I just returned from Iraq on a congressional delegation trip with Senator MCCAIN. And I wanted to report to my constituents.

The first thing that I have concluded in looking at the situation there and in visiting there is that we need a special envoy sent by the President of the United States to move forward with a national unity government.

Things on the ground are not going well. Things are deadlocked. There has been no government since 3 months after the election. We have a lame duck government, and we have a crucial international situation going on.

The current government is riddled by corruption and inertia. So, Mr. President, we need to send a special envoy.

Secondly, I visited the troops in Iraq, some New Mexicans and many others from across the country. And when I think of what they have done since the invasion over 3 years ago, it makes me very proud. Saddam Hussein and his sons are out of commission. We have held three elections, and the Iraqis have adopted a constitution.

We have trained over 224,000 troops to the highest levels of training, more than 100,000 police and security personnel. We have spent billions of dollars in reconstruction.